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Subject: Weekly Take from Region 7

LOOK BACK: 25 OCT TO 1 NOV

We dived into V/V Phase I planning after senior policy call. I've tasked DRA and ARA to assist in aggressive schedule to furnish Reg 7 plan to Gwen by date established on 23 Oct memo. As we had not elected to offer V/V plan during FY15 budget submissions in July/August, owing to projected attrition being on target, we will accelerate. But Reg 7 is in a good place for this exercise owing to our comprehensive "Pathways to Work Force of the Future" enterprise. We anticipate standing up a very small internal "tiger team" next week and proceeding to decisional stage week of 11 Nov, in order to submit Phase I V/V plan to HQ late the week of 18 Nov.

Water Director spent a day in Des Moines Wednesday conferring with IDNR Env Div director and IDNR Secretary about implementing the CAFO modernization plan, which we hammered out and announced in Sept. The conversations were fruitful, positive. My Director feels we're in a better place with Iowa on a range of issues than we have been in years, which is unexpected (but welcome) in light of the shift in governors. Bottom line: party differences have mattered not one iota in affecting Iowa agency leaders' commitment to working through issues with Reg 7, and may have actually sharpened IDNR's willingness to "do what is right" despite gubernatorial and stakeholder coolness to this Administration.

I wish I could report the same level of sustained progress on water issues with Missouri. This state has been the last holdout in the basic CWA duty of classifying waters into designated uses. This Region has been sued, successfully, three times in past 10 years by environmental NGOs to prod action out of Missouri. The hitch: Missouri requires a "citizen commission" to approve a rule classifying waters, and the ag and municipal stakeholders hold a powerful grip on that commission. The commission meets in Jefferson City on 6 Nov, and Reg 7's water office, OW at HQ, and Regional Counsel have discussed an approach that offers Missouri a way forward, or the implied threat of promulgation if either the commission again fails to act or the rule package that it approves does not meet CWA standards. Nancy Stoner and her team are on board with this stance. The MDNR leadership wants to work with EPA, but the politics of that state on water are fierce and not at all sympathetic to EPA.

We are working closely and well with HQ on planning the Administrator's visit to KC on Weds, 6 Nov. See below for some more info on this event package.

Planning for the Monday, 4 Nov, carbon pollution listening session has gone forward effectively. We anticipate hosting over 250 attendees. We anticipate at least one enviro NGO using a corner of this business park (location cleared with both facilities and OGC) to unfurl banners and inflate a rubber coal-fired power plant to make whatever points the NGOs want to make. We have been told by Sierra Club organizers that a number of Midwestern Club members will come to Lenexa to make a "big statement." Attendance list so far discloses no comparable counter-effort by coal-friendly interests, though we have picked up some rumors that local GOP group(s) will come in numbers to articulate their opposition to "Obama's War on Coal." I did a one-hour call-in program on the Climate Action Plan with Kansas City's public radio station on Weds, which went exceedingly well, thanks to effective preparation by our OPA and Air Division. Media so far on the session has been pretty light.

LOOK AHEAD: 4 NOV TO 10 NOV

The first of two big events for Reg 7 is the Monday GHG listening session. We've much appreciated the readouts from other regions, especially Reg 8's. Suffice it to say, we have a superb RA in Reg 8. Our Air team is ready to host an effective public session. Becky Weber, Air director, commenced our state by state outreach Friday, 1 Nov, with 2 days of conversations in Lincoln, Neb, co-hosted by Nebraska env agency director. She reported just now those were constructive, well-attended, and produced a commitment by NDEQ to engage constructively with Reg 7 as the year goes on.

The second big event is huge for us: the Administrator will meet with Reg 7 senior staff Weds early morning and will host a Reg 7 all-hands immediately after. I so much appreciate Gina and her planning team agreeing to host the all-hands. We are already publicizing it using the TV screens throughout RO, and by means of our internal message board. We hope to have a nice, big turnout, despite the fairly early start, because most Reg 7 folks are at work by 8am.

Administrator's day Wednesday includes 3 more important events: she will co-host with Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver (KC area congressman) an ag listening session in the far eastern exurbs of Kansas City (where the city gives way to the rural reaches of mid-Missouri); she will meet about 30 leading business reps for lunch at the KC Chamber of Commerce in downtown KC (in our historic Union Station, which just celebrated its 99th birthday); and she will announce EPA Reg

7's EJ small grant mid-afternoon with Black Health Care Coalition at a site in the central city that serves low-income families in a predominately African American neighborhood. Rep Cleaver has been invited to both the lunch and the EJ event: as a former KC mayor, he will be a welcome presence at both, should he have time to attend. Prep materials for these events are on their way to HQ even as I write, and we appreciate input from both the scheduling team and Brian Bond, who has been helpful in enlisting a broader group of business stakeholders via Business Forward.

West Lake Landfill in suburban St Louis remains a key focus point this week: contractors are on site, under EPA oversight, testing the West Lake site in preparation for constructing a large trench to separate the radioactive contaminated material in West Lake from a neighboring municipal SWLF (Bridgeton), under state regulation. As usual, the aggressive anti-nuke group in STL has communicated a steady string of demands and hyperbolic warnings, which Reg 7 is processing as they warrant attention. This pre-construction testing phase will continue through late Nov/early Dec. We anticipate convening a public meeting late in the year to share new groundwater data (an ongoing commitment Reg 7 made to the CAG) and to outline continued efforts to obtain data needed to reconsider the original ROD, which called for "capping in place" West Lake. An observation: very early in the Lisa Jackson term, OSWER overrode Reg 7's ROD and directed the Region to reconsider the remedy and to assess new data. Five years later, that data refresh is moving ahead slowly, as each round of data generates additional pressure from the anti-nuke group for more data, analyzed for more risks. Factions in both OSWER and OGC have, since probably well before I arrived as RA, worked quietly and not so quietly to undercut Reg 7's authority and expertise. I believe some in this faction have at times used "Inside EPA" to float their criticisms, which complicates orderly decision-making and has given the anti-nuke group a sense that the agency contains sympathizers to their stated ideological goal of completely removing the West Lake waste and transporting it to a disposal site in Utah or Idaho. Reg 7's work, overseen by Superfund Division and Regional Counsel, has at times been strengthened by this internal critique, but at many other times it has caused delay and furnished material for NGO critics.

Karl Brooks

Regional Administrator

EPA Region 7

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